

Safety Bulletin



Backyard Swimming Pool Safety SB05-012



According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, in recent years an average of about 350 children under 5 years old drowned nationwide annually. More than half of these deaths occurred in the summer months. Among unintentional injuries, drowning is the second leading cause of death to this age group after motor vehicle incidents. Another 2,700 children are treated in hospital emergency rooms each year for near-drowning incidents. Most of these cases involve residential pools and result in permanent brain damage.

Other than the emotional costs related to these accidents, the economic costs can be astronomical. A near drowning will typically range from \$75,000 for initial emergency room treatment to \$180,000 a year for long-term care. The annual economic costs of residential pool drownings and near-drownings of young children are estimated to be \$450 million to \$650 million.

The key to preventing these tragedies is to have layers of protection. This includes placing barriers around your pool to prevent access, using alarms on doors that access the pool, and being prepared in case of an emergency.

Though it seems obvious, close supervision of young children is vital for families with a home pool or spa - and not just when outside using the pool. A common scenario is that young children leave the house without a parent or caregiver realizing it. Children are drawn to water; not knowing the terrible danger pools and spas can pose. Also, just because children know how to swim, doesn't mean they are drown-proof.

Parents and guardians: Only you can prevent drownings. Watch children closely at all times and ensure that everyone is aware of the potential hazards. Children can slip away in the time that it takes to answer the phone.

Personnel residing on the installation must comply with Fort Hood Regulation 210-48 which mandates that housing occupant(s):

- Receive approval from Fort Hood Housing to set the pool up.
- Erect aboveground pools only.
- Secure the pool with a fence.
- Have appropriate liability insurance.
- Must drain wading pools daily.
- Will not alter ground contours and restore seeded or lawn areas.
- Will use care when draining pools and control run off.

Are responsible for damages, injuries, or deaths caused by the installation, use, or removal of the pool.

Follow these tips to prevent drownings and injuries in pools:

- Fences and walls should be at least 5 feet high and installed completely around the pool. Fence gates should be self-closing and self-latching. The latch should be out of a child's reach.
- The area adjacent to the outside of the fence must be free of objects that may aid children in climbing over the fence. These include items such as chairs, tables, tree branches, etc.
- If your house forms one side of the barrier to the pool, then doors leading from the house to the pool should be protected with alarms that produce a sound when a door is unexpectedly opened.

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- A power safety cover - a motor-powered barrier that can be placed over the water area -- can be used when the pool is not in use.
- Keep rescue equipment by the pool and be sure a phone is poolside with emergency numbers posted. Knowing cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) can be a lifesaver.
- Don't leave pool toys and floats in the pool or pool area that may attract young children to the water.
- For aboveground pools, steps and ladders to the pool should be secured and locked, or removed when the pool is not in use.
- If a child is missing, always look in the pool first. Seconds count in preventing death or disability.
- Pool alarms can be used as an added precaution. It is advised that consumers use remote alarm receivers so the alarm can be heard inside the house or in other places away from the pool.
- Assign an adult "water watcher" to supervise the pool/spa area or any other body of water, especially during social gatherings.
- Don't rely on swimming lessons, life preservers, or any other equipment to make a child "water safe".
- Parents, guardians, and babysitters should learn how to swim and be trained in rescue techniques and CPR.
- Mount rescue equipment by the pool such as a lifesaving ring, shepherd's hook, and a CPR sign.
- Never dive into aboveground pools. They are too shallow.
- Don't dive from the side of an in-ground pool. Enter the water feet first.
- Dive only from the end of the diving board and not from the sides.
- Dive with your hands in front of you and always steer up immediately upon entering the water to avoid hitting the bottom or sides of the pool.
- Improper use of slides presents the same danger as improper diving techniques. Never slide down head first - slide down feet first only.
- To prevent body entrapment and hair entrapment/entanglement, have a qualified pool professional inspect the drain suction fittings and covers on your pool and spa to be sure that they are the proper size, properly attached, and meet current safety standards.